



# Assembly of Western European Union

DOCUMENT 1669

10 November 1999

## FORTY-FIFTH SESSION

---

The move towards professional armed forces in Europe

## REPORT

submitted on behalf of the Defence Committee  
by Mr Davis and Mr Schlöten, Rapporteurs

ASSEMBLY OF WESTERN EUROPEAN UNION  
43, avenue du Président-Wilson, 75775 Paris Cedex 16  
Tel. 01.53.67.22.00 – Fax: 01.53.67.22.01  
E-mail: [assembly@weu.int](mailto:assembly@weu.int)  
Internet: <http://www.weu.int/assembly/welcome.html>

*The move towards professional armed forces in Europe*

---

**REPORT<sup>1</sup>**

*submitted on behalf of the Defence Committee<sup>2</sup>  
by Mr Davis and Mr Schloten, Rapporteurs*

---

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**DRAFT RECOMMENDATION**

on the move towards professional armed forces in Europe

**EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM**

submitted by Mr Davis and Mr Schloten, Rapporteurs

**I. Introduction**

**II. Reform and the move towards professional armed forces in Europe**

**1. The situation regarding professional armed forces in Europe**

- (a) Spain
- (b) France
- (c) Italy
- (d) Portugal
- (e) Countries opting for a mixed system
  - (i) Germany
  - (ii) Finland
  - (iii) Poland

**2. Developments in professional armed forces**

- (a) Belgium
- (b) Netherlands
- (c) United Kingdom

---

<sup>1</sup> Adopted in Committee by 19 votes to 0 with 1 abstention.

<sup>2</sup> *Members of the Committee:* Mr De Decker (Chairman); MM Zierer, Schloten (Vice-Chairmen); MM Baumel, Blaauw, Mrs Calleja, MM Cioni, Colla, Contestabile, Cox, Davis, Dhaille, Díaz de Mera, Dreyfus-Schmidt, Goris, Goulet, Henry, Irmer, Leers, Lemoine, Maginas, Mardones Sevilla, McNamara, Medeiros Ferreira, Mota Amaral (Alternate: Mrs Aguiar), MM Neumann, Pereira Coelho, Polenta, Pottakis, Robles Fraga, Lord Russell-Johnston, MM Selva, Siebert, Speroni, Theis, Valk (Alternate: Dees), Mr Verivakis (Alternate: Micheloyiannis), Mr Wilshire (Alternate: Townend).

*Associate members:* MM Bársony, Godal, Mutman, Yürür, Tanik (Alternate: Kalkan).

N.B. *The names of those taking part in the vote are printed in italics.*

III. The issues involved in professional armed forces

1. Trends in defence perceptions
  - (a) New missions for the armed forces
  - (b) Professional armed forces and force projection
  - (c) The growing importance of reserves
2. The issues for Western societies
  - (a) Rationalisation in the professional armed forces
  - (b) The role of women and minorities in today's armed forces

IV. Conclusions

Professional armed forces and building defence Europe

*Draft Recommendation*  
*on the move towards professional armed forces in Europe*

---

The Assembly,

- (i) Noting the rapidly evolving positions of various European countries on compulsory military service;
- (ii) Considering, in the light of recent crises in Europe, the need for Europeans to have at their disposal light forces available at very short notice;
- (iii) Noting that the issue of maintaining or abolishing compulsory military service is perceived very differently by the various European countries;
- (iv) Noting that the move towards professional armed forces is encountering political difficulties in certain countries, which are concerned that it might destroy the link between the army and the nation;
- (v) Noting the benefits of compulsory military service as a social melting-pot and source of education for young people;
- (vi) Concerned about the many difficulties involved in ensuring that military service proves a worthwhile experience for all young people in a given age group, and also that there is a strong risk that some will be treated unfairly;
- (vii) Noting that economic criteria have a growing influence on decisions in the field of defence;
- (viii) Noting that as a result of the higher cost of professional servicemen, the size of armed forces will decrease considerably if compulsory military service is abolished;
- (ix) Noting that a professional army makes for greater flexibility in terms of deployment, particularly for operations abroad,

**RECOMMENDS THAT THE COUNCIL**

1. Study the comparative costs and specific advantages and disadvantages of armed forces with and without compulsory military service;
2. Study the impact of abolishing compulsory military service on the organisation of reserve forces and its implications for the collective defence of national territories;
3. Ask the governments of the 28 WEU nations, regardless of whether their countries have compulsory military service, to adopt structures making it possible to have available at short notice a sufficient number of forces that can be deployed in a multinational framework for crisis management, on the basis of "convergence criteria" to be drawn up within WEU.

## *Explanatory Memorandum*

*(submitted by Mr Davis and Mr Schloten, Rapporteurs)*

### *I. Introduction*

1. At the start of the 1990s two WEU member countries, Luxembourg and the United Kingdom, had armed forces consisting solely of volunteers. In 1999 Germany and Greece are the only WEU members which, for the time being, have decided to maintain compulsory military service as the basis for making up their armed forces. Belgium and the Netherlands have already gone over to a system of professional armed forces while France, Italy, Portugal and Spain are in the process of doing so and Germany is engaged in deliberations with a view to deciding whether a model based on conscription, a mixed system or professional forces is best suited to its needs. The move towards professional armed forces has become virtually inevitable and in the medium term this system will become the common denominator for all the armed forces of the majority of WEU and EU member states.

2. For all that, what would appear to be a simultaneous shift away from what used to be the universally followed practice of compulsory military service in favour of a system of volunteers is not the result of any concerted process but rather of a change in national perceptions of defence policies due, on the one hand, to the different type of conflict Europe and the rest of the world have experienced since 1990 and, on the other, to the growing priority accorded to economic factors in developed societies. The Gulf War (January to February 1991) and the media attention it attracted helped to imprint on people's mind the picture of professional British and French soldiers carrying out operations on the ground while the other European NATO and WEU countries were confined to providing air and sea support. The case for professional armed forces was thus given a high profile in national public opinion.

3. The quest for a "new world order" and an increase in the number of "humanitarian" operations conducted under the auspices of the United Nations in Africa (Somalia, Rwanda, Mozambique), Asia (Cambodia), the Caribbean (Haiti) and Europe (Bosnia and Herzegovina, the For-

mer Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Kosovo) have stretched available human resources. But recourse to conscripts entails the risk, in the event of the loss of human life, of public opinion turning against the idea of European governments becoming involved in international operations. At the same time, the end of the cold war created conditions conducive to reduced defence spending in a climate in which governments were inclined to play a less prominent role in the management of the economy. Added to these two factors is the "hi-tech effect" which was widely publicised during the Gulf war as a result of the impact of new technologies used in military operations and was given prominence again in NATO's military air campaign against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (March-June 1999).

4. Similarly to what has happened in the private sector, most WEU member states and other European countries have downsized their armed forces in order to make structures more flexible and the forces themselves more efficient in terms of all-round capability and force projection, and so as to be able to provide them with sophisticated equipment. The rising cost of such equipment weighs heavily in defence spending as a whole and means choices have to be made to the detriment of the most exposed resource, namely troops and the facilities assigned to them (bases, training centres, exercise sites). For this reason, going over to professional armed forces would appear to be a logical solution in order to maintain a credible defence posture in a tight budget situation. From the political point of view it is also a popular solution with younger-generation voters, a considerable number of whom view compulsory military service as a legal obligation rather than as a duty they volunteer to undertake towards society.

5. The move towards professional armed forces will take place depending on the national priorities of each state, taking account of defence policy options – which armed forces for which missions – and funding availability. These national procedures will also overlap with one another when it comes to forming multinational units and during humanitarian or peacekeeping operations. Cooperation of this sort is increas-

ingly becoming the rule with unilateral operations the exception. For planning purposes this entails a greater requirement for interoperability, as regards both equipment and also procedures, training and exercises. Where a country has professional armed forces, the level of standardisation in those areas makes it easier to mount multinational operations in terms of troop unit management in the field.

6. While professional armed forces in today's world are one way of making forces more effective, they are not the only answer. Armies made up solely of volunteers are not the norm in the majority of European countries and some, such as Germany and Sweden, are looking for half-way solutions with a mixed system of conscripts and career soldiers under contract. The cost of a professional army is not comparable to the cost of an army of conscripts and this reduces the scale of any savings that can be made in the short term. There are also other factors to be considered when assessing the various implications of professional armed forces, such as recruitment problems – with which the United States and the United Kingdom for instance are having to contend – the contributions to be made by women and (in terms of culture or religion) “ethnic” minorities, changes in the demographic pyramid over the next 15 to 20 years and enhancement of the role of reserves as a link between the armed forces and society in general.

## *II. Reform and the move towards professional armed forces in Europe*

7. The end of the cold war, the lessons learnt in the Gulf war and the growing number of operations conducted on behalf of the United Nations all set most WEU, EU and NATO member states thinking about the missions of their armed forces and the means available to them. The disappearance of the threat of a “world” war in Europe resulted almost immediately in the reduction of national military assets within the framework of the CFE and CFE1-A treaties signed at the start of this decade. The Gulf crisis and intervention abroad put the spotlight on projection capabilities and the need for forces to be deployable in sufficiently large numbers and equipped with sophisticated weapons. Strategic mobility (transport), the logistics component (reception facilities and support over long distances), the acquisition of intelligence data – in particular by

observation satellites – and its processing and, increasingly, computerised battlefield management have accordingly become a top priority in defining new national defence systems.

8. Each country has reacted individually, depending on its priorities and capabilities, in order to adapt to these new situations. The idea of professional armed forces gained currency rapidly (in Belgium and the Netherlands), more gradually (in France, Italy, Portugal and Spain) and has been set as an objective in the Russian Federation. At the same time most of the European countries that have chosen not to take up this option have embarked on a thorough reform of their defence systems with a view eventually to arriving at the same result: a more compact, flexible and all-purpose defence posture some of whose components could, if necessary, be deployed outside national borders. In countries which already have professional armed forces, such as Belgium and the Netherlands (since 1997) and the United Kingdom, the reforms under way are also designed to make more effective use of manpower and improve management.

9. The various approaches taken by different countries may in time result in convergence of procedures, training and equipment. This, coupled with the formation of multinational units and action in the framework of joint operations led by NATO, WEU and, in due course, the European Union could produce the nucleus for a real European army in the service of a common foreign and defence policy. The almost continuous reduction in the number of personnel, ageing populations and the rising cost of military equipment – above all in strategic areas such as observation satellites and transport by land, air and sea – make cooperation and the pooling of resources a foregone conclusion in the light of what has been said above.

### *1. The situation regarding professional armed forces in Europe*

10. The move to an all-volunteer system involves a radical reform of armed forces, with major implications for national foreign and defence policies. In the countries that have embarked on this course, the main objective is force projection. The shift in emphasis this entails from a territorial defence posture to one of intervention abroad is not always easy to reconcile with the need to defend national territorial integrity. This

situation is not new to Belgium and France which until recently had an active military presence in Africa, but in countries with no such experience it requires a review of defence doctrines. The arrangements made for IFOR and SFOR in Bosnia and Herzegovina and for KFOR in Kosovo enabled the governments and military staff of a large number of European countries to test their ability to manage intervention abroad by their armed forces in situations where national interests were not under direct threat.

11. An all-volunteer system for armed forces also has domestic, economic and social repercussions whose effects are not felt immediately. As a professional soldier is more expensive<sup>1</sup> than a conscript, it is not possible to maintain such large forces. Some parts of a force's infrastructure (such as bases, training zones and depots) therefore become redundant and this has consequences at local level, for example when it comes to jobs. Within the armed forces the disappearance of conscripts also has an impact on administrative, supplies and logistics posts in that recourse has to be had to outside subcontractors paid at market rates and, in the event of conflict, to reservists. The issue of troop reserves is therefore tied up with the whole process of the move to professional armed forces.

12. However, notwithstanding the favourable publicity it has received, the shift away from compulsory conscription to voluntary recruitment is not a course of action that has been adopted by the majority of European countries. For historical, economic and social reasons or because defence is no longer given the priority it had during the cold war, many countries are reforming their armed forces by mixing professionals with conscripts. Specialised units geared to operations abroad are being created or strengthened but the rationale of compulsory military service is still the norm for recruitment purposes. The cost of contracts for volunteers and maintaining a mix of professionals and conscripts within a tight budget does not allow for an increase in the number of such units and this limits the cases in which troops can be sent abroad to take part in operations outside national borders.

<sup>1</sup> The cost includes salary, training, equipment and material benefits (accommodation, health insurance, various bonuses).

13. Professional armed forces too are in the throes of reforms intended to make them more effective. In most cases such reforms are motivated by a concern to make savings at all levels where these affect defence budgets. The rising cost of equipment is a significant factor where budgetary choices are concerned and has to be offset by making staff cuts and adopting a new management approach. The second objective of such reforms is to adapt defence requirements to changes in society by trying to persuade young graduates, including women, to join the armed forces. This is done by means of recruitment campaigns and special attention is often paid, as is the case in the United Kingdom at present, to ethnic minorities.

#### *(a) Spain*

14. Since 1991 Spain has had a mixed system of conscripts and volunteers, the longer-term objective being to arrive at wholly professional armed forces. The law on the "Arrangements governing armed forces personnel" adopted by the Chamber of Deputies on 18 February 1999 defines the priorities and objectives of the reform of Spain's armed forces to be completed by the end of 2002.

15. In its preamble the law states that "the changeover to a system of professional armed forces with a view to them becoming more operational, more flexible, fewer in number and better equipped, represents a major and historic challenge because the objective being pursued is not merely for them to consist of professional soldiers and sailors but is more ambitious in that it aims in particular to constitute new professional armed forces". Under Title III of the law, Article 19 sets the complement of Spain's armed forces between 150 000 and 170 000 troops including some 102 000 to 120 000 soldiers and 48 000 officers and NCOs. Military careers are open to women without restriction with the law defining professionals as "Spaniards in the armed forces exercising professional service"<sup>2</sup>. Reservists are divided into three categories<sup>3</sup>: temporary, volunteer and conscript.

16. The current mixed system will continue until 2003 but problems have arisen with the recruitment of volunteers. For example, 12 583

<sup>2</sup> Title I, Article 2.1.

<sup>3</sup> Title XII, Chapter I, Article 162.



candidates applied for the 5 800 vacancies available in January 1999, but they were spread unequally over the three services: there was an average of 16 applications per vacancy for the air force, three for the navy and only two for the army<sup>4</sup>. Women's applications accounted for 20%. An article in the newspaper *El Pais* quotes a Ministry of Defence spokesman as saying that three is the minimum number of candidates per post necessary to ensure a sufficient recruitment rate. Although this example does not matter very much in the current mixed system, if it were to recur it could lead to delays in implementing the process of going over to professional armed forces.

#### (b) France

17. The move to professional armed forces in France is nothing other than a "cultural revolution", not so much in terms of military doctrine but in the way it affects the role played by compulsory military service in French society where it is seen as one of the bases of the Republic. There have always been professionals in the French military, serving for example in the regiments of the Foreign Legion or in a number of specialist units made up mainly of volunteers under contract. However, the Gulf war and above all the conflicts in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, together with operations in Africa over the last ten years have shown the limits – in terms of human resources – of a system based on compulsory military service.

18. The close cooperation that developed in Bosnia and Herzegovina between French forces and their British counterparts made up wholly of professionals also created an atmosphere conducive to the gradual move towards professional armed forces in France. The decision to that end taken by the French President, Jacques Chirac, in 1996 was enshrined in a law passed on 28 October 1997 stipulating that conscription would end in 2002. In order to take on board political opposition to this move<sup>5</sup> and the concerns expressed about maintaining the link between the army and the nation, the system that has been established comprises three stages: short courses for young

people on defence arrangements<sup>6</sup>, military service and armed forces volunteers<sup>7</sup>. Military service is due to end on 31 December 2002 and since 1 January 1999 a census of young women has been under way with a view to their attending the short courses on defence arrangements. Contracts for career soldiers are being concluded for a period of 12 months and are renewable annually for a total duration of five years.

19. The objective is to arrive at a total complement of 330 000 professionals by 2002-2003, supported by 100 000 reservists. A law on reserves is currently being drawn up and should be passed during 1999. This ambitious project, requiring ongoing budget support<sup>8</sup>, is aimed at providing France with the military means commensurate with the role it intends to play in Europe and the wider world. According to Major General Barrié, Deputy Chief-of-Staff in the Army's "Organisation and Human Resources" department, the objective is to be able to "simultaneously deploy 30 000 troops to a theatre of operation for one year with partial relief operations, and a 5 000-strong force that could be relieved, or to deploy 50 000 troops to take part in a major operation"<sup>9</sup>. Where necessary these forces will be backed up by a "first reserve" of 30 000 troops half of whom will be officers and NCOs.

#### (c) Italy

20. After envisaging the possibility of keeping a mixed system, Italy has also opted to change over to an all-volunteer system. Developments in the European geostrategic environment, greater participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations and, above all, the fact that Italy is directly exposed to the conflicts in the Balkans have led the Italian authorities to adopt a White Paper on Defence advocating a majority of professionals in its armed forces which should have good mobility and equipment suitable for con-

<sup>4</sup> *El Pais*, 12 February 1999.

<sup>5</sup> The French Senate had prevented the law from being passed on 16 October.

<sup>6</sup> These consist of one-day information and assessment courses for young people over 18, involving various tests. Certificates of attendance are issued at the end of the course.

<sup>7</sup> Article 1 of law No. 97-1019 of 28 October 1997 on the reform of national service.

<sup>8</sup> Expenditure on personnel accounts for 43.6% of the total defence budget for 1999.

<sup>9</sup> Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and the Armed Forces, 3 March 1999. The figures quoted refer solely to the army.

ducting a wide range of missions<sup>10</sup> and which can be integrated in multinational military structures in the framework of NATO and WEU. Under this project, which should be completed by 2005, the total strength of the army will be some 140 000 troops<sup>11</sup>. Operational forces will be divided into three categories: deployable troops, reaction forces and forces for territorial defence.

21. Volunteers are recruited either for renewable periods of three years (short-term volunteers) or five years (permanent volunteers). The current plan continues to give importance to compulsory military service since it is estimated that there will be 60 000 conscripts in 2005<sup>12</sup>. Alongside this mixed system in which professional armed forces are assigned mainly to action abroad while conscripts take charge of territorial defence, there is also a major programme to restructure forces commands and equipment with special emphasis on deployment means. Nonetheless, the idea of all-volunteer forces is beginning to take root and will lead to a radical overhaul of the arrangements set out in the White Paper on Defence for 2000.

22. This explains why on 8 March 1999 the Italian Chamber of Deputies debated three motions and a resolution whose purpose was clearly to abolish compulsory military service. After describing the changes that have taken place in the European security landscape, the reforms under way in other allied countries with a view to moving to all-volunteer forces and the need for armed forces capable of playing a significant part in operations abroad, the motions request the Government to submit:

(within two months of their adoption) a report "setting out practical arrangements for the urgent abolition of compulsory military service accompanied by a restructuring of Italy's armed forces based on a system of volunteers who will be professionals, with the cost to be covered mainly

by the sale of property that the Ministry of Defence no longer uses or needs ..."<sup>13</sup>;

(within three months) "a plan for the restructuring and reorganisation of the armed forces (...) setting the length of military service at six months as from next year. For the interim period the plan should envisage two options: confirmation of the mixed system or choice of the system of professionals only (...) "<sup>14</sup>;

(within three months) "a report making provision for:

(a) a thorough change in the armed forces system accompanied by the abolition of compulsory military service and the recruitment of the requisite number of volunteers;

(b) a reduction in the number of military means, to be carried out with a view to improving their quality and modernising them and taking due account of budgetary constraints (...) "<sup>15</sup>.

23. The resolution<sup>16</sup> requests the Government to submit within 30 days a report "setting out practical arrangements for the urgent abolition of compulsory military service, accompanied by a restructuring of Italy's armed forces based on a system of volunteers who will be professionals, with the cost to be covered mainly by the sale of property that the Ministry of Defence no longer uses or needs...". In his reply to the texts submitted by the parliamentarians, the Deputy State Secretary for Defence, Mr Giovanni Rivera, stressed that:

"(...) The purpose of the defence model which has been under study for the past few years is to make provision for an operational force with fewer troops but able to react more rapidly and above all capable of taking action outside Italian territory in peacekeeping missions and operations to maintain stability throughout the world. This model, as currently defined, proposes a mixed system, that is one con-

<sup>10</sup> Including operations to maintain public order, drawing on lessons learnt from the *Vespri Siciliani*, *Riace* and *Partenope* campaigns to fight organised crime in a number of Italian regions.

<sup>11</sup> The current number of troops is about 185 000.

<sup>12</sup> In 1998 there were 113 000 conscripts.

<sup>13</sup> Motion 1-00339, 14 January 1999.

<sup>14</sup> Motion 1-00352, 2 March 1999.

<sup>15</sup> Motion 1-00356, 4 March 1999.

<sup>16</sup> Resolution 6-00075, 8 March 1999.

sisting of both volunteers and conscripts with a clear tendency to an increase in the voluntary component.

However, in view of recent international events, the Ministry of Defence is convinced that the time has come for Italy too to begin the changeover from a mixed system to an all-volunteer and professional system for military service.

The reasons underlying this decision are mainly operational and strategic: at the present time an operational capability depends above all on mobility, speed of action, professionalism, the human factor and the quality of training and equipment. However, as we know, information concerning the phenomenon of conscription shows that it will be difficult in the medium term to continue with the current mixed system. Demographic trends, the growing percentage of conscientious objectors and the job constraints that result from regionalised compulsory military service suffice to show that it will be extremely risky in the medium term to rely on conscription in order to meet operational needs (...)<sup>17</sup>.

24. Mr Rivera also said the Government was drawing up a draft law that was to specify "among other things the time-frame and practical arrangements for the whole process of the changeover from compulsory military service to a voluntary system as well as arrangements for the transition from one to the other in order to guarantee ... the effectiveness and operational capability of the armed forces". On 27 September, the Chamber of Deputies adopted a law on women's military service allowing women to serve in the armed forces for the first time.

#### *(d) Portugal*

25. Towards the end of the 1980s, Portugal embarked on a radical reform of its armed forces and in 1992 brought in a mixed system of conscripts, volunteers and career soldiers under contract. The length of compulsory military service was reduced to four months. This reform, which was logically supposed to lead to all-vol-

unteer forces in time, did not result in the hoped-for improvements as regards personnel management and overall efficiency in the armed forces<sup>18</sup>:

- the operational units had to supplement their ranks with conscripts owing to an insufficient number of volunteers;
- a lack of appropriate infrastructure and training facilities made it difficult to cope simultaneously with conscripts, volunteers and professionals under contract;
- the short duration of military service restricted the overall effectiveness of the forces system;
- the cost of the volunteer system, contracts and compulsory military service increased the share of the defence budget allocated to personnel;
- there was a drop in the general level of preparation and training.

26. The lessons drawn from this first experience led the Portuguese Government to decide to change over to a single system of professional armed forces by 2003. Over the period 1989-98 numbers in the Portuguese armed forces went down by 36% from 72 000 to 46 000 men and women with the number of women set to drop even further over the next few years<sup>19</sup>. Officers and NCOs account for about 48%, this rate being the norm in professional systems. As in to other countries which have embarked on similar reforms, it is the army which is experiencing the greatest difficulty in meeting its recruitment targets, with only 38% of volunteers and soldiers under contract.

27. On 5 November 1998, the Government tabled a draft law on military service with a view to fully professional armed forces<sup>20</sup>. There are a number of references in the preamble to the reforms under way in other European countries and the draft law sets three main objectives<sup>21</sup>:

<sup>17</sup> Italian Chamber of Deputies official report of the proceedings of sitting 499, pages 26-27.

<sup>18</sup> White Paper on the move to professional armed forces, Ministry of Defence, 2 April 1998.

<sup>19</sup> By 2003 the Portuguese armed forces should number some 40 000.

<sup>20</sup> Draft law No. 214/VII, 5 November 1998.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

- a reduction in troop numbers accompanied by greater flexibility and mobility;
- reform of reserve troops whose numbers are to be reduced and who are to be more available;
- streamlining of recruitment structures.

28. The draft law proposes the introduction of a system of contracts with a minimum duration of two years and a maximum of nine years with the possibility of longer contracts (20 years) for high-level technical posts. Compulsory military service will not be abolished and provision is made for it to be re-introduced in a crisis. This is made clear in Article 1.2 of the draft law which states that: “In peacetime military service shall be based on a voluntary system” and in Section III concerning arrangements for recruitment in “exceptional” circumstances. Voluntary military service is also open to women but the scope of the text suggests it is limited<sup>22</sup>. The draft law, on which there is a broad consensus among the political authorities and civil society in Portugal, was brought before parliament for the first time in March this year and is due to be passed during the second half of the year.

*(e) Countries opting for a mixed system*

29. Going over to a system of professional armed forces is the choice of countries which aspire to a more active role in operations abroad and which lie in a stable geographic region. In the present day, the fear of a violation of territorial integrity is fairly limited and, indeed, does not exist as far as a certain number of states is concerned. Smaller numbers of armed forces, the move to a professional system and the preference for mobility and deployment compared with a static defence posture are the options best suited to this situation.

30. For other countries, which feel more exposed to external threats, maintaining large numbers of armed forces in which as many citizens as possible do military service, continues to be the basic model supplemented by a partly profes-

sional system in order to facilitate participation in multinational operations in the service of the United Nations or on behalf of NATO. Domestic policy considerations, a desire to preserve the advantages compulsory military service represents by involving citizens (the idea of discipline and training to serve one's country) and defence spending criteria steer choices towards mixed systems. This is the case in Germany, Finland and Poland, to mention a few examples.

*(i) Germany*

31. Germany has not yet decided which type of armed forces best meets its defence requirements. Domestic as well as economic and foreign policy considerations make the decision-making process at national level highly complex. The German armed forces have strong roots in civil society and their activities are subject to democratic scrutiny by a Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces, a post that was created in 1957 in order to “monitor adherence to the principles of internal command (*innere Führung*)<sup>23</sup> and observance of soldiers' rights<sup>24</sup>”.

32. The situation of the German armed forces during the cold war was more straightforward. As a frontline state Germany needed a large army – with heavy equipment and a marked defensive posture – for territorial defence. The Gulf war brought home the fact that this model was not suited to the deployment of forces outside the NATO area. The conflict in former Yugoslavia, with its direct impact on Germany in the form of a massive influx of refugees, prompted the political and military authorities to adopt a more active, preventive posture with regard to crises.

33. This stance met with political reservations from not only the opposition but also majority parties, and the German Constitutional Court had to be called in to settle the debate. In its judgment of 12 July 1994, the Court ruled that the engagement of German troops abroad in the framework of a collective security system (NATO or WEU, for example) and under a United Nations mandate was in accordance with Germany's Basic Law (or Constitution), provided that it was approved by the Bundestag. That date marked a radical change in Germany's approach to secu-

<sup>22</sup> According to Article 31, women may volunteer for military service in accordance with constitutional principles concerning the equality of citizens and the social function of motherhood, and taking account of the specific nature of military duties.

<sup>23</sup> A concept based on notions of a code of conduct, rules of command and military ethics.

<sup>24</sup> [www.bundeswehr.de](http://www.bundeswehr.de).

rity problems in Europe, one confirmed by its deployment of forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania and Kosovo.

34. The Government then set about tackling the delicate issue of reforming Germany's armed forces, and proposed three categories of forces:

- "the mobilisation-dependent Main Defence Forces (MDF) continue to be the backbone of national and Alliance defence;
- the readily operational Reaction Forces (RF) – approximately 50 000 strong – constitute, first of all, the active component of national defence designed to protect the mobilisation and deployment of the Main Defence Forces. Secondly, they are Germany's readily available contribution to NATO and WEU operations, should a contingency demand such a contribution. Finally, they are the pool of forces from which numerically limited German contingents can be made available for certain UN-led missions;
- the Basic Military Organisation is the basis that supports training activities and the day-to-day operation of the forces<sup>25</sup>."

35. The total peacetime strength of forces has been set at 340 000, with the possibility of increasing to 680 000 in wartime:

- 233 400 servicemen for the army;
- 77 400 servicemen for the air force;
- 27 200 servicemen for the navy.

36. Of those, 200 000 are "regulars and temporary-career volunteers" and 135 000 conscripts. Women may serve as volunteers (currently some 3 500) in the medical service or military music service. The armed forces continue to employ a large number of civilians (143 588 as at 31 December 1998). The reaction forces (RF) are composed of 37 000 army and 12 300 airforce servicemen<sup>26</sup> who are "volunteer conscripts, short-service and career personnel".

<sup>25</sup> [www.bundeswehr.de/sicherheitspolitik/grundlagen/security-policy/III-3.htm](http://www.bundeswehr.de/sicherheitspolitik/grundlagen/security-policy/III-3.htm)

<sup>26</sup> *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 7 July 1999, page 24.

37. Like other European countries in the same situation, Germany is finding it hard to meet these targets and following a Defence Ministry report in April 1999, the Government decided to set up a commission on the future of the Bundeswehr. According to this report, cited in *Jane's Defence Weekly*:

"(...) the variety of tasks being performed, both in Germany and abroad, has stretched the resources of our armed forces to the maximum, and this increasingly affects their structure.

The main causes of this development are the limited size and composition of our reaction forces, the growing shortage of personnel in the officer corps, the shortage of materiel and the inadequate provision of funds for the defence budget<sup>27</sup>".

38. This commission, established on 3 May under the chairmanship of former German President Richard von Weizsäcker, is to submit its findings in 2000. For the immediate future the Government has undertaken to increase the strength of the reaction forces to 63 000. The principle of conscription (10 months) has not been challenged, but the emphasis will be on recruiting volunteers or on the possibility of contracts allowing conscripts to serve beyond the allotted period of military service. The mixed system may nevertheless become difficult to manage in the present budgetary circumstances, with regular budget cuts planned until 2003<sup>28</sup> (the share earmarked for personnel expenditure being due to remain at around 50%<sup>29</sup>). Materiel expenditure, most of which relates to the introduction of the Eurofighter<sup>30</sup>, will probably oblige the Bundeswehr to drastically revise its human resources policy, which could lead to a reduction in its overall strength and to an increase in the relative share of professional forces.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> A budget of DM 45 333 million, i.e. about 2% of GDP, is planned for the year 2000.

<sup>29</sup> NATO: implications of European integration for Allies' defence spending; United States General Accounting Office, June 1999, page 39

<sup>30</sup> About 30% of the 1999 budget for combat materiel, with no delivery being scheduled before 2000.

*(ii) Finland*

39. In a report the Finnish Council of State submitted to Parliament on 17 March 1997, entitled "European security and Finnish defence", armed forces policy is described as follows:

"The central principle in the Finnish defence solution is territorial defence. It involves an extensive surface area and numerically strong units being used to tie down the opponents and force them into decisive battles in the areas where it is most advantageous to use our own forces. The areas of greatest strategic importance in the context of the nation as a whole will be held in all circumstances. Such a defence system, which does not identify threats from any particular direction, remains suitable for a country like Finland. It lacks a strategic offensive capability and supports well the security policy pursued by Finland. However, the pattern of the war of the future, development of technologies and changes in society presuppose a further development of our defence doctrine.

Territorial defence can be implemented only with the relatively strong field army that general conscription provides. Conscription is a natural solution for countries that primarily take care of their own territory's defence. General conscription is also the only arrangement that enables peacetime preparedness to be kept relatively low and yet provides the possibility of multiplying the strength of the defence forces tenfold in a short time. Thus a substantial capacity to repel an attack is obtained with little expenditure of economic resources. General conscription also expresses the nation's commitment to defending its independence"<sup>31</sup>.

40. Since 1996, Finland has also developed a voluntary national defence system whose objectives are to "strengthen the will to defend the nation, to further Finland's defence capability and to enhance the capacity of public authorities to deal with exceptional circumstances (such as

crises and national emergencies). (...) The collaboration between voluntary defence associations and the Defence Forces within the (...) National Defence Training Association provides the right framework for ensuring a valuable contribution to voluntary defence work (...)"<sup>32</sup>.

41. The document also brings to light a problem shared by all countries which are restructuring their armed forces on the basis of a mixed or wholly professional system, namely, how to accommodate real requirements taking account of defence spending constraints:

"So far, the Defence Forces have been able to adjust their operations to the level dictated by cuts. However, falling appropriations over a period of several successive years is beginning to affect defence structures. Economies have been made by consuming stockpiles and lowering the level of maintenance of real estate and material. Thus, necessary procurements and refurbishment have been postponed.

The decline in operational funds has reduced opportunities to provide reservists, conscripts and regular personnel with training that is broad in diversity and closely relevant to practical needs. In particular, field exercises have had to be reduced. Provision of new training material and clothing and protective gear for conscripts has likewise slowed down. In 1991 there were 340 000 days of refresher courses. That total has declined to an average of 185 000 in recent years. The total number of reservists without refresher training is nearly 100 000, which substantially lowers the field army's level of training level. Reservists are losing their "feel" for wartime tasks.

Compromise has had to be made with respect to the standard of surveillance of our sea areas and air space. The economies have not endangered Finland's territorial integrity, because military activities in our environs have been on a low level in recent years. A problem besetting the Navy and the Air Force is a lowering of the standard

<sup>31</sup> European Security and Finnish Defence; Report by the Council of State to Parliament on 17 March 1997; [www.vn.fi/vn/english/publicat/970317se.htm](http://www.vn.fi/vn/english/publicat/970317se.htm).

<sup>32</sup> Voluntary defence work aims; Finnish Ministry of Defence; [www.vn.fin/plm/evmn.htm](http://www.vn.fin/plm/evmn.htm).

of personnel training as practical operations are reduced. It will be important over the next few years to secure the foundation of the defence system by bringing the Defence Forces' operational expenditure into line with the real need<sup>33</sup>.

42. The Government is proposing a plan to restructure the armed forces and the defence posture over a ten-year period (1998-2008) based on the following considerations:

"The main emphasis in the development of defence in the planning period 1998-2008 will be on ground forces. The preventive capability of the Defence Forces and their capacity to react will be improved by creating readiness brigades in the military commands as well as by raising the standard of material and training. This will have the further effect of facilitating a reduction in the overall size of the ground forces. The Navy and Air Force will remain at their present personnel levels and their performance capacity will be enhanced commensurately with the development of military technology.

(...)The personnel strength of the Defence Forces will be reduced by in all 110 000 over the planning period. Among the measures by means of which this will be achieved are a gradual phasing out from the wartime configuration of the most poorly-equipped brigades. That will leave the Defence Forces with a wartime strength of about 430 000. The wartime forces will be divided into Operational and Regional forces.

The Operational Forces will enable defence preparedness to be increased rapidly and serve as the linchpin of the defence effort.

The Regional Forces will provide the whole country with a defence shield. They are intended to perform combat and support tasks that are limited to a specific

area or target. They include a significant proportion of the wartime forces<sup>34</sup>.

43. According to the proposals in the Government's report, compulsory military service has been reformed and the length of service spread over three periods:

- "the training period for an officer, non-commissioned officer or those conscripts in specially demanding posts is 362 days;
- the service period for conscripts trained for work requiring special skills is 270 days and for the other rank and file 180 days.

More than 80% of the age group do their military service<sup>35</sup>.

A review of the process for reforming the armed forces is scheduled for 2001, to be followed by an overall assessment of defence planning in 2005.

### (iii) Poland

44. Poland, which recently became a member of NATO, started reforming its armed forces some time back in preparation for its accession to the Atlantic Alliance. Similarly to other countries, it encountered internal, economic and political obstacles. The preparations it is now making in order to join the European Union, which include compliance with a number of strict economic criteria, limit its room for manoeuvre on defence expenditure and the share that can be spent on reforming the armed forces. Modernising infrastructure and equipment in order to bring them up to NATO standards is taking priority over the armed forces' requirements in "human" terms. Poland has nonetheless earmarked a commendable proportion of its GDP for defence, the figure in 1998 being 2.2%<sup>36</sup>, placing it within the average for NATO member states. However,

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> "Facts about the Finnish Defence Forces – Description"; Finnish Ministry of Defence; [www.vn.fi](http://www.vn.fi).

<sup>36</sup> "NATO: implications of European integration for Allies' defence spending"; page 11; United States General Accounting Office, June 1999. The 1999 budget is lower, standing at 2.03% of GDP (Source: Polish Ministry of Defence; [www.wp.mil.pl](http://www.wp.mil.pl).)

<sup>33</sup> European Security and Finnish Defence; Report by the Council of State to Parliament on 17 March 1997; [www.vn.fi/vn/english/publicat/970317se.htm](http://www.vn.fi/vn/english/publicat/970317se.htm).

personnel costs account for over 60% of expenditure.

45. The plan to reform the armed forces, called "Armia 2012", envisages a reduction in personnel from 230 000 (half of whom are conscripts) to 180 000 in 2004. One of the objectives is to increase the number of volunteers under contract<sup>37</sup> to 60%, to reduce the number of officers to 30% and increase the number of NCOs to 40%. The length of military service will be reduced to 12 months (from the present 18 months). As the Polish authorities recognise:

"Not all the solutions for the model of future armed forces have been found yet. The discussion is still in progress, and the shape of the Polish Armed Forces of the 21st century is emerging gradually. Numerous issues have been initiated – others, for example the programme of technology modernisation, are subject to the strict rigours of the country's economy. The basis for this process of transformation, which will take several years, was Poland's firm aspiration to become a NATO member state, and its strategic aim is modern, well-trained armed forces, ready to defend the country and to act within the international peacekeeping and peace-enforcing operations"<sup>38</sup>.

46. The present structure for military service is as follows:

"Liability to compulsory national military service applies to Polish citizens, i.e. men aged 18 to 50 (in the case of Warrant Officers and Commissioned Ranks, to the age of 60) and women aged 18 to 40 who have skills and/or qualifications useful in military service (in case of Warrant Officers and Commissioned Ranks, to the age of 50).

(...) Primary military service lasts for 18 months (...).

#### *Civil defence primary service*

Conscripts are called up and assigned to civil defence primary service by the Chief

of the Recruitment Board. The service lasts for 18 months.

#### *University and college graduates' military training*

This form of service prepares officer reserves. It lasts two or six months.

#### *Reserves servicemen training*

This form of service is based on the participation of the reserves in military exercises.

While in the reserves, a reservist can take part in exercises for a maximum period of 18 months.

#### *Replacement service*

Conscripts who do not wish to adjourn their military service but profess religious rules and moral principles contradictory to those in the military can apply for a replacement service in public utility establishments. The service lasts for 24 months.

#### *Voluntary military service*

Men aged under 25, who have completed their primary military service, are eligible for voluntary service. The service lasts one to four years.

#### *Career military service*

A career serviceman of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland can be exclusively a Polish citizen who possesses appropriate qualifications and physical and psychological capabilities for professional military service. Career servicemen constitute three fundamental corps: career officers, Warrant Officers and NCOs. Recruitment takes place on the basis of voluntary enlistment. There are two forms of career service.

*Career service on a permanent basis* performed, first of all, by career officers who have completed their course of studies at appropriate military education establishments.

*Career service on a temporary basis* performed by career officers who wish to practise their profession for a certain period of time, who obtain from colleges or

<sup>37</sup> Currently for a period of one to four years..

<sup>38</sup> Polish Defence Ministry; "The Polish armed forces" [www.wp.mil.pl](http://www.wp.mil.pl).



universities qualifications useful in the military, and who undergo military training. A contract is drawn up for a minimum period of five years; however, a contract with the same person can be signed three times at the most (i.e. for a period of 15 years)<sup>39</sup>.

47. Poland's endeavours to reform its armed forces are geared to achieving a modern force ready to face the challenges of the next century. However, the various economic priorities and the choices to be made as regards channelling available resources are bound to slow this process down. It is therefore important for Poland's allies in NATO, for the Alliance itself and for the European Union, which is to have its own security and defence policy, to provide it with advice and assistance. Poland's frontiers today are also those of the Alliance, and tomorrow they will be those of the European Union. A period of uncertainty is beginning in eastern Europe and its consequences will determine the future of European security. Modern armed forces for Poland are an additional guarantee of security for our continent.

## **2. Developments in professional armed forces**

### **(a) Belgium**

48. The law of 31 December 1992 amending the coordinated laws on the militia abolished compulsory military service. Over a period of five years, from 1993 to 1998, the strength of the army – the main component of the Belgian armed forces – dropped by 50% and today there are 27 500 soldiers (half of whom are officers and NCOs). Women account for some 7% of the total and have access to every type of weapon. Contracts are signed for two-year periods with the possibility of three one-year extensions. Reservists are divided into three categories: they are assigned to a specific unit, to territorial defence duties or have no particular assignment. There is no compulsory call-up of reservists in peacetime.

49. Despite being few in number, Belgian troops are highly active in operations abroad carried out under the auspices of the United Nations or NATO. However, since the tragic events in Rwanda in April 1994, the Belgian presence in Africa has been scaled down considerably. Commitments in Croatia and Bosnia and Herze-

govina have mobilised a large number of troops and limited their availability outside Europe for long periods. An insufficient number of recruits – a problem that will in the longer term also affect other countries which opt for professional armed forces – has an impact on the number of troops Belgium is able to deploy.

### **(b) The Netherlands**

50. In 1993 the Netherlands Government decided to abolish compulsory military service with effect from 1 January 1997. However, this measure makes provision for recourse to conscription in a crisis situation deemed to be a sufficiently serious threat to the country's security. The "Framework Memorandum for the 2000 Defence White Paper", which the Ministry of Defence made public in March 1999, provides a detailed description of the objectives to be attained for the Netherlands' new armed forces and aptly draws attention to recruitment issues and the need for a young and qualified force.

51. The memorandum, containing "principles and guidelines for the Defence White Paper"<sup>40</sup>, will form the basis for making up the armed forces. It defines three essential missions for those forces whose total strength is set at approximately 70 000 troops in 2000:

"(a) defence of national and NATO territory against a – for the foreseeable future – limited military threat and defence against a multitude of security risks of various types;

(b) protection and promotion of the international rule of law;

(c) support and assistance, both national for the execution of civilian government tasks and international in the event of disaster-relief and peace-building missions".

With a view to carrying out these missions, the restructuring process currently under way is focusing on five objectives: "combat readiness, deployability, flexibility, mobility and international interoperability for units".

52. The memorandum contains advanced thinking on the future of European defence and

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> For a summary of the Framework Memorandum, consult the Netherlands MoD site on [www.mindef.nl](http://www.mindef.nl).

asks relevant questions about the direction to be taken. The introduction states that: "In the execution of their main tasks, the Dutch armed forces will always act as part of an international alliance of forces. Our country provides modules which are integrated into a larger whole consisting of contributions from other countries. It is desirable to improve coordination of the efforts of the Allies. In the long term, there could also be some kind of specialisation (...). Better coordination and specialisation could lead to more responsible choices in major investments in equipment (...). The situation calls for intensifying international consultation about the coordination of defence efforts and about the possibilities for the distribution of tasks". The authors of the memorandum also consider that: "the difference between operating under Article 5 of the NATO Treaty and operating in crisis-management operations on the borders or near the treaty area is fading".

53. On the subject of reform of the armed forces, which have been professional since 1997, particular attention is paid to questions of recruitment and human resources management. The approach taken is very pragmatic and the memorandum establishes a link between recruitment and the state of the economy and the employment market by pointing out that: "Qualified and highly motivated personnel are vital to good defence policy. The defence organisation has to vie with strong competitors on the employment market. In order to succeed, the defence organisation must be open to developments in the society of which it forms part, without losing sight of the special characteristics of the armed forces. This is all the more important because the suspension of the obligation to enlist has resulted in far fewer Dutch people having personal experience of the armed forces than used to be the case. Although the armed forces' right to exist is not under discussion, they must focus attention on the position they hold in society that helps prop up the defence organisation. Furthermore, broad social support benefits the image of the defence organisation, which in turn is important for its position on the employment market".

### *(c) The United Kingdom*

54. The United Kingdom's armed forces went professional in 1960 and can be held up as a model for other countries wishing to go down the

same road. The wars in the Falkland Islands (1982), the Gulf (1991) and former Yugoslavia (1991-99) showed the British forces' capacity to deploy both troops and equipment despite the fact that they had a permanent contingent of troops on duty in Northern Ireland. And yet, in wars involving a "coalition" of forces, the United Kingdom has always been able to make a significant contribution in terms of both quality and quantity.

55. The system also owes its success to cultural and social factors as the regiments that make up the armed forces are actively involved in the day-to-day life of the towns and regions where they are based and service in such units is sometimes a family tradition. The armed forces also use modern marketing methods for recruitment that are in tune with changes in society. Their effectiveness in crisis situations helps to maintain their prestige and reputation among the civilian population, which is an asset for recruitment purposes.

56. The ambitious programme of reform of the armed forces published by the Government on 8 July 1998 confirms the priority given to force projection over conventional territorial defence tasks. Chapter 5 of the Strategic Defence Review (SDR) which concerns the future shape of British forces states that: "In the cold war, we needed large forces at home and on the continent to defend against the constant threat of massive attack from an enemy coming to us. Now, the need is increasingly to help prevent or shape crises further away and, if necessary, to deploy military forces rapidly before they get out of hand. Most force projection operations of this kind are likely to be multinational"<sup>41</sup>.

57. Chapter 6 of the SDR contains a detailed discussion of recruitment and personnel management issues and points to some shortcomings that may have negative consequences for implementing the reforms:

"We also expect a lot in skills – defence is a highly professional, increasingly high technology, vocation. We must therefore recruit highly motivated people. We must invest in their training. We must retain them and maintain their motivation. To do

<sup>41</sup> Strategic Defence Review; Chapter 5: The future shape of our forces; 8 July 1998; [www.mod.uk](http://www.mod.uk).

this we must equip them properly for the tasks we give them. We must also ensure that our demands on them and their families do not become unreasonable (...).

We must also deal with the underlying problems of undermanning and overstretch that we have inherited. This is essential to maintain the professionalism for which our forces are so widely admired and, in particular, to provide the highly responsive forces we need for the new international environment. This was emphasised by the evidence from the Review's internal consultation. Our people are looking to the Review to set out a future for defence in which they can have confidence. A crucial test will be whether we can solve these problems (...).

Overstretch and undermanning are linked problems. Overstretch is trying to do too much with too little manpower. One result is that units and individuals – especially in key areas – are separated from their families too often and for too long. Another result is that preparation for other tasks and longer term training suffer.

Undermanning – that is when units are not up to planned strengths – is one of the causes of overstretch. Individuals within undermanned units have to do more and, particularly for operations, individual reinforcements have to be brought in from other units. Unsurprisingly, the additional pressures from persistent overstretch contribute to higher exit rates from the armed forces thus adding to manning difficulties.”

58. This situation is similar to the one with which the American armed forces have been grappling for some years. According to *TTU Europe*, a French news bulletin, “in summer 1999 the armed forces were still understaffed by 9 000 men, slightly up on the April figure. This figure includes a requirement, also up, for 612 officers, a situation which is still unsatisfactory (...). In fact many officers are choosing to leave the forces between the ages of 28 and 36 (...)”<sup>42</sup>.

59. To improve the situation in the United Kingdom, which is a significant factor if the reforms are to succeed, the SDR considers that: “We need to restore intakes to a level which meets our long-term needs. This is a challenging task but recent trends are encouraging. We need to recruit high-quality adaptable people in a rapidly changing society. We will be putting additional emphasis on recruiting and adapting our approach to better reach all sections of the community. We are particularly anxious to recruit more from the ethnic minorities and more women, whose potential we have not fully tapped. (...) we need to take positive action to make the Services more attractive as a career. For most people the Services cannot be their only career. It is therefore vital that we provide them with transferable qualifications for return to a civil society which does not at present sufficiently recognise the high skills and real responsibility acquired in the Services”.

60. The SDR was drawn up on the basis of the principle that “In the post-cold war world we must be prepared to go to the crisis, rather than having the crisis come to us. Capabilities and equipment will be modernised to provide highly flexible, well-equipped forces able to project power very rapidly to potential troublespots and crises”<sup>43</sup>. To achieve these objectives, the focus is being put on force projection capabilities and support, with measures including an increase in the number of Royal Navy and Royal Air Force reservists and more manpower for the Regular Army accompanied by a significant reduction in the Territorial Army whose numbers are to go down from 57 000 to 40 000. This is a model army which will serve as a example for other countries moving over to the system of professional armed forces but which, contrary to the Netherlands approach, is designed to maintain present levels of performance in all three services: the army, navy and air force. While the British reforms will also require a major financial effort, they have to fit in with the general downward trend affecting European defence budgets

<sup>42</sup> *TTU Europe*, No. 286, 9 September 1999.

<sup>43</sup> Press notice and key points of the Strategic Defence Review; [www.mod.uk](http://www.mod.uk).

and it is planned to cut defence spending by 3% in real terms by 2002<sup>44</sup>.

### *III. The issues involved in professional armed forces*

61. Force projection would appear to be one of the main arguments for a general move to professional armed forces. An awareness of the need for preventive action as opposed to the cold-war posture of playing a waiting game is now dominating considerations in headquarters all over Europe and is behind the reforms under way. The slow convergence of national interests towards common decisions in foreign, security and defence policy is a factor that encourages the idea of systems being aligned on those models which would appear to be the most effective for handling present-day crises. Even in countries which have retained compulsory military service, a debate is going on between the advocates and opponents of professional armed forces and it is highly likely that the coming years will see more changes.

62. Going over to a professional system is not simply a technical procedure designed to make the armed forces more effective; it is also a social choice. Once compulsory military service is abolished, some sectors of society are bound to lose touch with the military world and in the long run this will make it more difficult to reintroduce even limited conscription if the need were to arise. Decisions as to whether to switch to professional armed forces also give rise to a debate on what can be called a "defence culture" in society. Where this exists, the link between the armed forces and civilians can be maintained and developed in a positive manner.

63. Efforts to promote the image of the armed forces are also important, in particular to attract the younger generation. In recruitment campaigns in the United States, the United Kingdom or France, for instance, greater emphasis is increasingly being placed on technology, especially computer technology, which is more likely to attract a section of the public used to playing video games and surfing the Internet. Humanitar-

ian operations are another aspect given prominence as they have a positive rating in society.

64. In the case of the vast majority of EU member states, military service with a view to internal and external security is seen as an obligation that people generally put up with but which is increasingly being challenged. Being a conscientious objector is the most obvious way in which to do this but young people also resort to other means to avoid military service. An extension of the duration of a young person's studies, which often goes hand in hand with a deferment of service, also restricts the extent to which the armed forces can integrate with society and ends in discrimination between the various sectors of the population. Given the level of technical expertise required for the use of certain items of equipment and of modern computer and communications technologies, the effectiveness of the armed forces suffers where there they do not have enough qualified personnel. Tomorrow's armies will be more mobile but they will also depend on technology and its application for military operations.

#### *1. Trends in defence perceptions*

65. In the year 2000 about half the military in NATO and EU countries will be full-time professionals or will be in the process of moving in that direction. The other half is geared to mixed systems which will probably lead in practice to a bias for mainly volunteer systems around 2005 followed by a move to fully professional armed forces as soon as the domestic political context allows. This trend is also the result of changes in national defence perceptions in which the priority given to territorial defence is gradually being replaced by active intervention in crises abroad or outside the framework of military or economic alliances.

66. Since the Gulf war, which falls into the category of conventional military intervention in response to one state attacking another, humanitarian motives have become the main reason for taking action in what are for the most part internal conflicts. The "right of humanitarian intervention" is a concept that appeals to public opinion especially as, in most NATO and EU countries, there are no conflict situations likely to provoke armed action on the part of a third party. In spite of all the activism in this area, humanitarian intervention is still bound up with national

<sup>44</sup> For 1999/2000 the UK defence budget is £21 730 million (at constant prices). In 2001/2002 it is estimated that defence spending will account for £21 555 million (at constant prices); [www.mod.uk](http://www.mod.uk).

foreign policy considerations from which economic interests are not excluded. The difference between Kosovo and East Timor is indicative of this state of affairs. In the first case there was a readiness to destabilise the FRY (by resorting to military action and an economic and political embargo) in order to make Kosovo an autonomous region while in the second, the proposal made was for dialogue and economic aid to Indonesia if it agreed to the presence of UN forces on territory which the United Nations itself has always maintained did not belong to that country.

*(a) New missions for the armed forces*

67. The Petersberg Declaration<sup>45</sup> adopted by the WEU Council of Ministers on 19 June 1992 defines three types of mission in which forces of WEU member countries could be engaged:

- “humanitarian and rescue tasks;
- peacekeeping tasks;
- tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peacemaking”.

At the time, intervention in Iraqi Kurdistan, Somalia and former Yugoslavia had a strong impact in the media which impressed public opinion and the governments became actively involved in such efforts. Seven years on, in 1999, NATO finally decided to carry out “Petersberg missions” itself by setting up IFOR (1995-97) and SFOR (since 1997) in Bosnia and Herzegovina, followed by KFOR (since June 1999) in Kosovo. Operation Alba in Albania was the result of an *ad hoc* coalition created at the initiative of Italy which was having to contend with a massive influx of Albanian refugees (who were also looking to immigrate).

68. All these operations highlighted the limits of many European armed forces in terms of force projection and, even in cases where they were deployed, ground support over an indefinite period in a multinational context in which interoperability was a long way off being achieved. Among the countries involved in these operations the United Kingdom stood out for its rapid force deployment capabilities in terms of numbers and performance. The idea that professional armed forces and projection go together therefore gained currency and provided arguments for those in favour of this model.

*(b) Professional armed forces and force projection*

69. Between the war in the Gulf and Kosovo, a large part of the military operations conducted in the 1990s were “out of area”, in other words outside NATO’s traditional sphere of influence or areas bordering on states of the European Union or WEU. This therefore meant that headquarters had to organise force deployments well away from their national base camps in countries bordering on those where crises had occurred. Forces projection served to point up the differences between professional armies, or those with units of professional soldiers, and traditional conscript armies.

70. This lent weight to the idea that professional armies are better suited to efficient force projection than either conscript armies or those with a mixed system. The reality is more complicated. It is largely for reasons of a political rather than just a military order that mass conscription has recently gone out of fashion. It is also a matter of how the national interest is viewed. Post 1945, European colonial wars were waged by armies with a high proportion of conscripts, as was the Vietnam war. In the late 1980s, when the tensions of the cold war had subsided, Western democracies significantly reduced the length of military service. Numbers in service remained high but training periods were shorter and the number of tours of duty went up, thereby reducing overall efficiency – with the exception of a few special units or forces traditionally made up of professionals (such as the French Foreign Legion).

71. When the crisis broke out in the Gulf and the United States called on its allies to rally round, the vast majority of European members of NATO were unable in practice to field significant numbers of men and weapons. Only the United Kingdom and France were in a position to make a substantial contribution in those areas. It was not only combat units that were involved. Permanent support was required, in coordination with other forces operating by different methods and using different equipment. The lessons drawn from the Gulf war speeded up the move towards professional armed forces in a number of states, while others began to give serious thought to projection needs and forces packages that would result in an improved out-of-area presence. With the advent of the crises in former Yugoslavia and Albania, this approach was taken further.

<sup>45</sup> See Assembly Document 1322, 29 June 1992.

72. Notwithstanding geographic proximity and the existence of well-developed communications and transport networks (by air, overland and by sea) between former Yugoslavia and the rest of Europe, fielding armed contingents, both in the IFOR and SFOR frameworks, or that of Operation Alba (in Albania) or KFOR, represented a major effort in terms of selecting units, equipment, means of transport and accommodation. The large numbers of troops deployed (40 000 for IFOR in 1995, 20 000 for SFOR in 1997, 8 000 for Operation Alba in 1997 and nearly 50 000 for KFOR in 1999) put additional strain and pressure on national defence forces, including professional armies. Field tours of duty of four to six months on average, the need for stand-ins owing to planned departures, missions of indefinite duration, installation, maintenance and equipment replacement requirements all constituted further calls on already tight or limited defence budgets, delaying planned reforms.

73. The deployment of forces for humanitarian operations is transforming the armed forces into "firemen" who are called in every time the media spread news of a crisis or conflict. The concern to "keep up appearances" seems to be prevailing over foreign, security or defence policy considerations, the argument of the need for "maintaining the credibility of NATO"<sup>46</sup> to justify the intervention in Kosovo being one example. Once they are on the spot, depending on the political objectives set for their mission, troops find themselves engaged in policing and reconstruction activities, and sometimes in mediating between the different parties to the conflict, pending the establishment of appropriate civilian structures. The duration of missions and use of forces for civilian tasks give rise to new problems, such as the flagging morale of the troops and stress on the part of servicemen kept far from their homes and families, in some cases leading to the early departure of experienced soldiers and officers.

74. However, the lessons learned from these recent crises showed the edge a professional army has when it comes to force projection. The fact of being able to assemble large numbers of units within a short space of time and deploy them at long distances from base is a not inconsiderable advantage when it comes to managing

late twentieth century crises. Nevertheless, in multinational operations, the differing status of forces is a handicap to rapid response. While some countries can deploy large contingents quickly, others have to form units from a mix of professional troops and conscripts with the attendant constraints this entails for operational efficiency and domestic policy. These are parameters which states that still retain mixed systems must take into account in their planning process if they are resolved to make a significant contribution to European crisis management in the years to come.

### *(c) The growing importance of reserves*

75. The move towards professional armies means a reduction in the numbers under arms, which in turn has implications for reserve forces. The gradual disappearance of conscription even if it subsists in the legislation in the event of an emergency, means fewer people joining the ranks of the reserves. The ageing of the population also affects their numbers and a want of proper supervision and regular training is leading to a falling-off in their efficiency. Developments in society, the assimilation of the traditional nation state in a wider European whole and the absence of any identifiable territorial threat are calling into question the principles on which national defence was traditionally based until the end of the cold war, which served to justify the maintenance of substantial reserve forces.

76. Once the emphasis switches to force projection and the management of crises in Europe or elsewhere, and defence spending stagnates or declines, it becomes clear that the administration of a large pool of reserves, part of the inheritance of conscription, is a complicated issue which deserves to be discussed in a separate report. Reserves still have an important, if not central role to play in national defence today and in European defence tomorrow. First, the fact that they are there means that they can rapidly be drafted in as backup, freeing up resources for the front line. Then, once the situation on the ground is stable, their skills can be used to supplement traditional military functions, for example, restoring government services, reconstruction work or assisting the civilian population, until other players (NGOs and international organisations) are able to take over. Reserves are thus an essential operational fallback to forces on active service.

<sup>46</sup> US and NATO objectives and interests in Kosovo; US State Department, 26 March 1999, [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov).

77. The whole issue of reserves is closely connected with the future of the armed forces in Europe and most countries have plans for modernisation. In those countries moving in the direction of professional armed forces, specific legislation is in preparation to protect reserves from the effect of a substantial drop in enlistment numbers brought about by the ending of compulsory military service. In a professional armed forces context, reserve forces provide a link between the military and civil society, where previously it was essentially conscription which fulfilled that function. The new forces paradigm, in which forces are fewer in number and geared to deployment abroad, is increasingly dependent on reserves for carrying out missions, and requires a new kind of interaction between the armed forces and the wider society, and in particular the world of business. An example in point is that of the creation in the United Kingdom in the 1990s of the National Employment Liaison Committee (NELC) which brings together heads of industry, opinion formers and senior political and military figures to consider the problems industry would face as a result of the mobilisation of reserves when required. This initiative needs to be taken into account by European states which have chosen to move towards professional armed forces, in order to avoid damaging economic activity.

## *2. The issues for Western societies*

78. The move towards professional armed forces in Europe is the result of an evolution in national perceptions of defence, budgetary constraints and the development of civilian society. The latter aspect is very important in terms of plans to move towards professional armed forces in the future. Modern societies are consumer and leisure societies and societies based on communications networks. National educational systems are increasingly attempting to reflect the diversity of views, values and cultures present in their countries and countries are themselves becoming more regionalised. In such a context, traditional defence cultures and military values for the most part seem to younger generations like symbols of bygone eras now passing into dim and distant memory.

79. From society's perspective, compulsory military service provides better guarantees of social cohesion by providing physical and moral training for the younger generation and giving

them a sense of national belonging. However, although European armed forces, up until the 1950s, were "peoples' armies" composed mainly of young people from rural areas or the working classes and commanded by officers from the upper-middle and upper echelons of society, the situation changed drastically in the 1970s. Now, in those countries which still have conscription, most of the conscripts come from middle class families in urban areas, with a reasonably satisfactory standard of living:

"In the future the great majority of young people will live (...) as big consumers of the entertainment industry's products and media. Individual-centred values will strengthen and the [armed forces] will have to contend increasingly with (...) competition"<sup>47</sup>.

80. The longer periods spent on studies, the possibility of doing community service in local authorities, associations or state-run services (such as the police) as an alternative to military service and the short duration of compulsory military service have all reduced the relative importance of the armed forces as a factor for integration and education and their role as a social "melting-pot". Moreover, social change has generated new demands as regards representation (unions, freedom of opinion and expression) and conditions of service (more flexible training, various forms of religious and psychological support, more comfort and convenience in terms of facilities and equipment). Armed forces, whether composed of conscripts or professional soldiers, are evolving with society.

81. A professional armed forces system can also affect national cohesion in European countries such as Italy, Spain and – in a slightly different way – France, in which regions are intricately bound up with the administrative system. In the longer term, the armed forces could be more representative of a region than the nation as a whole and this would have consequences for their ties with civil society. However, the model of the British armed forces is a good one in this respect in that they have English, Welsh, Scottish and Northern Irish regiments. But this whole

<sup>47</sup> European Security and Finnish Defence; Report by the Council of State to Parliament on 17 March 1997; [www.vn.fi/vn/english/publicat/970317se.htm](http://www.vn.fi/vn/english/publicat/970317se.htm).

problem is concerned with historical factors in individual countries and their regions and the relations between regions and central authorities. The differences in economic and social development between regions and their respective powers all have a bigger impact on national cohesion than the actual changeover from compulsory military service to a professional system. Such a system must be allowed to run for a few years before that impact can be measured, given that national cohesion is already having to contend with the consequences of the increasing degree of inter-regional cooperation within the European Union.

82. Economic criteria also play a key role in this process and it has to be said – notwithstanding all the talk about increasing (or reducing) budgets – that defence is not an immediate priority. Civil society's demands are directed rather towards social welfare, education, employment, internal security and economic stability and growth. The introduction of the euro is forcing states to keep control of their budgets and, under present geostrategic circumstances, defence is not perceived as a rising star on the horizon<sup>48</sup>.

83. The evolution of civil society and a greater awareness of ethnic and cultural diversity have also led to new situations for which the armed forces were not necessarily prepared. Opening up military service to women and persuading young people from ethnic minority groups to enlist, together with the issues raised by the “coming out” of sexual minorities have created new challenges over and above that of the move towards professional armed forces. Professional armies like those of the United States and the United Kingdom are increasingly encountering situations of this nature that require sensitive handling and also lead to tensions in the relationship between the political authorities and the military establishment<sup>49</sup>.

<sup>48</sup> In 1997/98, the UK defence budget at 2.7% was almost the same as the home affairs budget at 2.1% of GDP (7% and 5% respectively of the nation's budget); SDR, [www.mod.uk](http://www.mod.uk).

<sup>49</sup> The European Court of Human Rights recently ruled against the United Kingdom for discriminating against homosexuals in the British armed forces.

#### *(a) Rationalisation in the professional armed forces*

84. Reforms of Europe's armed forces are also prompted and dictated by ongoing financial constraints which cannot all be lumped together as part of the peace dividend. The CFE and CFE-1A accords on disarmament and limitation of conventional armed forces set ceilings and limits on manpower and equipment to take account of geopolitical and geostrategic changes resulting from the ending of the cold war. However, the trend towards lower defence budgets, taking account of their evolution as compared with other economic indicators such as GDP, goes back to the 1960s and 1970s. As the economies of Europe grew stronger and the European Community was transformed into an economic power, the reform of industrial and financial structures to meet the challenges of world economic competition absorbed a large part of nations' budgets.

85. The easing of tensions in Europe reinforced that trend and defence postures became the object of reform in a drive to achieve greater efficiency and savings. Some states decided to strengthen operational capability while maintaining the principle of compulsory military service intact, others decided to move towards fully professional armed forces. Both cases reflect a desire to achieve savings and hold defence budgets down within well-defined limits. The growing cost of equipment also has to be taken into account by better procurement in terms of improved quality and much reduced quantity. As a result, large numbers of military personnel are becoming redundant and keeping them in jobs could damage overall efficiency. The turn-over of conscripts also involves shorter training and drill periods.

86. This “rationalisation” of the armed forces thus seems to reflect the dominant economic paradigm in its search for greater productivity through the use of new technology, which requires fewer but better-qualified staff. Taken together with the trend towards force projection, the move towards professional armed forces offers a credible solution for maintaining an effective defence posture increasingly geared towards external operations. In an economic context such as the present where the euro imposes a strict budgetary discipline, the professional option gives governments greater flexibility in managing their armed forces, whose



size can be more easily adjusted to the political and financial dictates of a particular set of circumstances.

87. This being the case, the savings achieved by the move towards professional armed forces are relative as compared with conscription or mixed systems. The absence of conscript forces has to be compensated, as far as certain functions go, by recourse to external civilian personnel at market prices. Wages, training and the various benefits intended to encourage people to enlist (health, training, pensions, family allowances and so on) cost more than for conscripts. Where economies are expanding and jobs being generated, the level of such inducements is crucial in preventing military staff with good skills from defecting to the private sector.

88. If compulsory military service is abolished, so is the community service offered as an alternative to conscientious objectors or done by other recruits who so desire. Conscripts working for the local authorities or social services, in both the public and private sectors, fulfil a social function at low cost for the duration of their service. Without that pool of conscripts to draw on, fewer of those community tasks will be performed, because their costs will increase and perhaps even become difficult to afford for some employers (local authorities and associations, for example).

89. While the debate on applying convergence criteria to defence would seem to offer a logical solution to the budgetary problems, it does not appear to be in tune with the economic realities of the moment. Without a European defence policy and a greater rationalisation of armaments procurement and production, the benefits of a budget increase would be limited to the national level. The low economic growth rates in European countries and uncertainty as to how the euro will perform during its teething period (which should end in 2002-2003) leave no scope for improvisation in this area. According to a report issued by the United States General Accounting Office on "NATO – the implications of European integration for Allies' defence spending":

"The link between increased economic growth and countries' defence budgets is, of course, an indirect one. In general, stronger growth leads to more resources for all spending needs, including defence,

and weaker growth can squeeze many budgetary categories. However, changes in the level of defence spending over time solely due to changes in economic growth can be relatively small. For example, holding assumptions about military threat and political support for defence spending constant, if GDP growth increased (decreased) by 1 percentage point per year relative to baseline projections, it would take about five years for real defense spending to increase (decrease) by 5%<sup>50</sup>.

*(b) The role of women and minorities  
in today's armed forces*

90. The ending of compulsory military service with its concomitant reduction in staff numbers raises the difficulty of how to guarantee sufficient levels of recruitment and employment within the forces in peacetime. One option has been to open the armed forces to women and another increasingly to look to ways of recruiting volunteers from minority groups within society. Modern society tends to be open-minded on such issues and professional armed forces must therefore expect to fall in with the new trend which involves special rights, usually enshrined by law, being granted to specific groups in society.

91. Clearly, the ending of compulsory military service under what are still fairly stable and encouraging economic circumstances will create recruitment difficulties, particularly among the middle ranks of society. Given the disciplinary constraints that prevail within the establishment and the risks involved in military action, salary levels do not compare at all well with the civilian sector when it comes to attracting candidates who are well-educated and professionally trained. To circumvent this difficulty, the armed forces can develop ancillary training programmes, offer opportunities for further study or set up links with industry to find jobs for staff when discharged. This is a practice followed by the US armed forces and the issue is under constant re-

<sup>50</sup> "NATO – the implications of European integration for Allies' defense spending", page 39; United States General Accounting Office, June 1999. The average GDP growth of countries in the euro zone is 2% *per annum* (OECD data) and the share of GDP allocated to in NATO countries is 2% on average (NATO data).

view in European countries moving towards professional armed forces.

92. It is clear, however, that within the European Union framework, investment in youth employment and the present access to higher education and professional training limit the attractions of military service as a tool of economic and social integration. The section of the population likely to be most attracted by a career in the armed forces is the one that tends to be excluded from the benefits such programmes offer and it is in that segment of the population that large numbers of citizens belonging to minority groups in society are to be found.

*(i) Women in the armed forces*

93. An increase in the number of women in the ranks of the armed forces is likely to be one major result of the move towards professional armed forces. The issue was discussed, in the context of change within the armed forces, in a Defence Committee report in 1991<sup>51</sup>. Its tenor was that the successful fulfilment of the tasks facing the armed forces, in peacetime and in time of crisis and war, requires a high degree of professional competence, continuity and experience. The armed services are competing in an expanding labour market, recruiting more and more women.

94. From a social point of view, it would also be of interest to examine the way women integrate into a professional body that retains a very traditionally masculine identity. There is a need to analyse the changes wrought by the growing number of women on the way of life and working methods of the armed forces. Here, three observations can be made:

- almost all European countries recruit women into the armed forces and the proportion is tending to increase;
- enlisting women is now essential to ensure satisfactory levels of entry;
- the presence of both men and women in the armed forces creates new situations in terms of personnel management which have implications for operational capabilities.

<sup>51</sup> "The role of women in the armed forces", Assembly Document 1267, 13 May 1991.

95. The presence of women in Europe's armed forces is not a new phenomenon. Women soldiers and officers have always been present in the medical, support and administrative services, and particularly from the 1970s onwards. However, the integration of women into operational units and their taking up commands leads to reservations on the part of the military establishment. This situation is tending to change with the move towards professional armed forces and the reduction in military staff numbers, while the proportion of women increases. In the United States, where the trend to more female staff in the armed forces is part and parcel of the increased economic, social and political role of women in society, the presence of women in combat units is no longer exceptional even though their number is as yet small. Restricted access to front-line units, however, leads to women being concentrated in other services, particularly logistical support.

96. Among the states that have decided to adopt the professional system and those that already have one, the percentage of women is still small and fairly constant: 7.2% for Belgium, 2.3% for Spain, 7.5% for France, 7.2% for the Netherlands, 1.1% for Portugal and 7.5% for the United Kingdom. Italy waited until it had a fully professional army before allowing female volunteers to enlist, by passing a law on 29 September 1999 committing it to that course. In the United States, women make up 14.4% of armed forces personnel<sup>52</sup>.

*(ii) Minorities*

97. The ultimate success of the move towards professional armed forces depends on an optimum resolution of the issue of assimilating minority groups in order to maintain adequate levels of recruitment. Selection of volunteers must take more account of physical and intellectual ability than ethnic origin or education, although, clearly, recruitment campaigns are directed primarily towards better-qualified candidates, who, because of their achievements at secondary school or university or in technical fields, are able to make better use of the new technological resources now available to the armed forces.

98. In theory, compulsory military service leads to reasonably faithful representation of the

<sup>52</sup> Source: Bundeswehr; [www.bundeswehr.de](http://www.bundeswehr.de).

different components of society within the armed forces. The presence of minorities is relatively easy to manage, at least in terms of numbers. With a professional army the situation is different. It has to take the candidates that come forward and cannot erect barriers to any given group of the population. This is a new situation for armies in the process of moving towards professional status and the problems it raises are also significant from the point of view of military efficiency.

99. The caricature of an American army consisting mainly of hoards of Afro- and Hispano-Americans has continued to imprint itself on the European mind since the Vietnam war. In point of fact, the percentage of those groups in the armed forces is pretty well in line with that in the US population in general. Hence in 1997, the composition of the US armed services was: 64% white, 19% Afro-Americans, 9% Hispanics and 6% other minority origin. Among the civilian population within the same age band (18-24) the percentages were 66%, 14%, 14.5% and 5%<sup>53</sup>. In all the armed forces taken together, the percentages were respectively 20%, 7% and 6%. However, for the army alone, Afro-Americans represented 30% of personnel<sup>54</sup>.

100. There is no reason to suppose that minority recruitment in Europe will be any different, though the problem remains of managing an ethnic minority presence in an establishment whose main purpose is not necessarily to bring about integration – this being rather the role of the educational system and anti-discrimination and equal employment policy. The armed forces must, however, seek to avoid situations that smack of racism or harassment, as far as minority groups within their midst are concerned. The United Kingdom has formulated a policy of integration that might be an example worth considering for countries who are in a transitional phase of their move towards professional armed forces.

101. The Army Equal Opportunities Policy, brought out from under wraps on 13 October 1998, was summed up as follows by General Sir

Roger Wheeler, UK Army Chief of Staff<sup>55</sup>: “In the Army we are determined to provide genuine equality of opportunity for everyone irrespective of their sex, marital status, race, ethnic origin, colour or religious belief. Army policy is crystal clear: discrimination, harassment and bullying will not be tolerated”. This policy is based on five principles:

- “treating everyone fairly and without prejudice;
- keeping the Army free from any form of discrimination, including harassment, victimisation and bullying;
- understanding what is expected of us in terms of duty, performance, standards and behaviour;
- focusing on the individual’s abilities;
- removing barriers which impact more harshly on people of certain racial groups or of one sex”<sup>56</sup>.

102. The launch of this initiative was followed by a recruitment campaign directed towards minority groups with the twofold aim of achieving the required annual level of recruitment (around 16 000 army recruits) and “the aim of reflecting society’s diversity”. Particular consideration was given to religious differences and associated practices and provision is made to the effect that, within an operational framework, “every effort will be made to secure a dispensation from the relevant religious authority (...)” with regard to dietary requirements or religious practices. Certain exemptions as regards dress are also allowed:

“In the Army, Sikhs can wear turbans and are also permitted to wear the five K’s: Kara (steel bangle), Kesh (uncut hair), Kanga (small comb), Kaccha (special-design knee-length underpants) and Kirpan (small sword). However, under certain operational circumstances, during training for operations and in some specialisations they will be required to wear operational or protective headgear. Examples are combat helmets and flying helmets. This can be achieved by wearing a patka under the

<sup>53</sup> “Fixing what ain’t broke – The renewed call for conscription”; Cato Institute, Policy analysis No. 351; 31 August 1999; [www.cato.org](http://www.cato.org).

<sup>54</sup> Minorities in uniform (figures at 31 December 1998); [www.defenselink.mil](http://www.defenselink.mil).

<sup>55</sup> “Equal opportunities”; [www.army.mod.uk](http://www.army.mod.uk).

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

operational headgear. In addition, where there is a high risk of Nuclear, Biological or Chemical (NBC) warfare, the wearing of a respirator is vital for survival. To provide an effective seal a smooth facial surface is essential and the beard (part of Kesh) will have to be shaved to the point where an effective seal is achieved. In training, however, although personnel will be required to perform the drills for wearing respirators, they will not be required to shave their beard”.

There are also similar provisions as regards diet, depending on religious practice.

103. One sensitive issue that remains to be resolved is that of sexual minorities, a controversial subject both in the United States and in Europe. The introduction of anti-discrimination laws and the possibility of recourse to such legislation to obtain justice through the national or European courts is likely to give rise to situations that are difficult to handle within an armed forces setting and between the military and civilian authorities. The recent ruling against the United Kingdom by the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg on 27 September 1999 is an example of such developments and the precedent thereby created could well be used by other countries<sup>57</sup>.

#### *IV. Conclusions*

##### *Professional armed forces and building defence Europe*

104. Within the gamut of reform of European defence forces, or those of Western European countries at least, the move towards professional armed forces seems the logical conclusion to the

adjustments in defence policies in response to the post-cold war geostrategic situation. Internal economic constraints have also influenced this process and maintaining conscription or mixed armed forces arrangements will become increasingly complicated to manage if the trend towards lower defence budgets is maintained. The ageing of Western societies, changes in the way people live and the impact of new production and communications technologies and methods, the assimilation of traditional nation states in wider economic and political groupings – integrated to a greater or lesser degree – make new approaches to defence necessary.

105. Traditional border defence tends no longer to be in the hands of the military establishment and is increasingly the responsibility of police forces operating ever more frequently in a European framework (Schengen or Europol, for example). Invasion is a notion that now applies almost uniquely to immigrants and asylum seekers, whereas organised crime and trafficking in drugs, arms or people have reached a pitch where they represent serious threats to national, regional and international security.

106. Controlling proliferation of nuclear, chemical or conventional arms is becoming a military concern even though legal, diplomatic and economic instruments exist to cope with such threats. Humanitarian interventions are giving way to full-blown warfare, complete with surgical strikes and collateral damage, as a means to enforce human rights compliance. Thus armed forces’ missions are hence becoming more complex, less transparent and give rise to a variety of interpretations. One individual might enlist for humanitarian operations, another to combat proliferation, yet others in order to find employment, continue with their studies or to feel more securely a part of society.

107. The various national defence authorities are seeking to justify their existence within this range of possibilities. The notion of force projection dominates current thinking but in view of the present number of crises, how long will it be before theory is tested in practice? Nearly 60 000 NATO troops are currently engaged in Bosnia and in Kosovo, the majority of them from European states of which only a handful can draw on professional units. At the same time, the focus of discussion is on the equipment that must be pro-

<sup>57</sup> Four RAF officers brought a case before the European Court of Human Rights arguing that their dismissal from the UK Royal Air Force was based solely on the consideration that they were homosexuals and that this represented a violation of Articles 8 and 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights. In the ruling it handed down on 27 September 1999, the European Court of Human Rights stated that the UK Government had not given solid and convincing reasons to justify its policy against homosexuals in the army and, as a result, the subsequent dismissal of the plaintiffs. Thus it took the view that a violation of Articles 8 and 14 of the Convention had taken place.

cured to guarantee more effective intervention in future crises, without overdependence on the United States. With equipment prices rising, it is again likely that the human element will be sacrificed, and sooner or later the question will arise as to who is to go in and occupy the terrain and protect civilian populations under threat. For this task what are needed are soldiers, trained men and women, equipped for the mission they are assigned and able to rely on adequate backup.

108. Europe has fewer laser-guided bombs, fewer Cruise missiles and fewer satellites than other powers but, overall, it has a human potential that constitutes its strength. The turning point in the war in Bosnia was the deployment of French and British ground troops with tanks and artillery, ready for action on the ground. The arrival in Rwanda of French troops restricted the scale of the humanitarian disaster; without the presence of European forces on the Kosovo borders, negotiations over a cessation of hostilities and the departure of Serb forces would have been more difficult still, if not impossible. The crucial factor in those developments was not the professionalism of the forces so much as the political will to deploy them.

109. Herein lies the key to enabling WEU and the European Union take action in crises affecting their vital interests or those of their members. The German Army, still a conscript force although now moving towards a mixed system, was deployed in Bosnia and Kosovo. There are also volunteer conscripts in both the Italian and French forces in the region and this has not raised any particular difficulty in political or operational terms. Similarly, in both of those crises, reservations over the deployment of American troops and barriers (of a domestic policy order) show that whether armed forces are professional or not does not have a direct influence on whether they can be used abroad.


110. In the debate on European defence, compulsory national service and the move towards professional status are technical issues. Between the fully professional model and mixed systems, Europeans have a substantial pool of forces,

suitable in quality and number for force projection. The gradual reduction in numbers in both professional and conscript armies means that, increasingly, multinational cooperation is necessary. The audit of forces currently in progress in WEU is an important step in that direction and has to be supplemented by action taken jointly in relation to equipment and interoperability. The setting-up of an independent European headquarters either in NATO or seconded therefrom, in the service of the European Union, and the creation of a European chain of command and control, stem from strategic choices much more important to the future of European defence than the type of force (fully professional, conscript or a mixture of both) available.

111. On this front, the prime consideration is political will. Up until now, reforms of the armed forces have been based on national, economic, social and military considerations, with a degree of lip service paid to multinational operations, force projection and the new geostrategic environment. However, the fact is that there is no longer one single European state that can alone deal with the many challenges that now exist in security and defence terms. The gradual convergence of defence postures, the introduction of a degree of task-sharing, the pooling of resources and capabilities (transport and intelligence, for example) are essential for a coherent and efficient European defence.

112. Within such developments the armed forces deserve particular attention in terms of personnel and equipment, and governments should be careful not to transform them into laboratories for social engineering to the detriment of their principal function – which is combat and preparation for war. In the world as it now is, in a state of flux, it is the men and women in the armed forces, be they professional or conscript, who represent the last vestiges of national identity in societies where the trend towards uniformity of economic policy, lifestyle, communication and mass culture is becoming ever more pronounced, through the process now universally known as globalisation.

---

IMPRIMERIE  ALENÇONNAISE  
Rue Édouard-Belin · 3<sup>e</sup> trimestre 1999  
N° d'ordre : 44219

---

PRINTED IN FRANCE



